# THEN and NOW!

By Frances H. Paulette

## PART 2- THE HOLLYWOOD STORY

The date was May 5, 1891; the people of the Hollywood Community were excited and proud. It was official - - - Hollywood, Va. has a Post Office!

DeWitt Beasley, 80, of Richmond, Va., remembers quite well the beginning of the Hollywood Post Office.

When Mr. Beasley's father, Ben Walker Beasley, built the family home (in view of the Hollywood Baptist Church), he permitted his brother, Cornelius Beasley to use one room of the house in which to operate a little Country Store and The Post Office.

Just how long Cornelius Beasley was Postmaster is a bit uncertain, but when he left, Mrs. Isabella Day Beasley, (Mrs. Ben Beasley, DeWitt's Mother) took over as combination Postmaster and Storekeeper. She was to serve in this capacity for the next thirty years.

The only other person to serve in the capacity of Postmaster of the Hollywood Post Office was Mrs. C. R. Banton who was appointed following Mrs. Beasley's 30 year term of service. Mrs. Banton served as Postmaster until the Post Office was closed.

The Star Mail Route served the Hollywood Post Office and extended from Chestnut Grove Post Office in Buckingham County to the Evergreen Post Office in Appomattox County.

Mrs. Ben Beasley's Country Store and Post Office was more than a place to buy stamps and household supplies. It was more or less the "Social Hall" of the Hollywood Community, especially for the young people.

After school was over for the day, the young people would head for the store to get a stick of candy, an apple or an orange.

Imagine, if you will, a group of young people in the little country store letting off steam after a day of being cooped up in school; things sometimes got a bit unruly, to say the least! None of this worried Mrs. Beasley; she knew she had things under control.

Just when the youth were getting a bit too wild, Mrs. Beasley would reach under the counter and get her "weapon". Just one look at the long, big whip that she kept ready for any emergency would do the trick . . . suddenly there was quiet.

From the time of the one - room log school house where the Hollywood Baptist Church had its beginning in 1878 until the two-room school was burned in the year 1932, there was a "whole lot of learning going on!"

It was a good many years after he'd left the Hollywood Community that someone asked DeWitt Beasley (age 80 and now residing in Richmond) where he had attended school. Without batting an eye, he proudly replied, "Hollywood Academy!"

There were many dedicated teachers, who, during their years of service in the Hollywood School System, were faithful to their duty of cramming the basics of 'reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic into the sometimes reluctant students.

The following are among those who taught in the Hollywood School: Captain Bethel, Rad Wheeler, Eddie Hardy, Helen Abbitt, Mary Hardy, Lou Ella Harvey Morris, Lelia Ferguson Webb, Eva Agee, Delocia Banton, Clem Ferguson, Ella Inge, Emma Cawthorn, Ethel Hamilton, R. P. Bryant, Virgie Inge, Charlsie Upton, Lelia Webber, Colyer Abbitt, Helen Dickerson, Georgie Sheppard, Vivian Clark and Walter Payne, Jr.

Often, out of necessity, there were as many as sixty pupils in one room where all subjects for the first grade through the seventh were taught by one teacher.

Some of the first teachers in the Hollywood School, as in other country schools back THEN, had students in their classrooms who were as old or in some instances even older than the teachers themselves.

There was no oil furnace or electric heat when the winter winds began to howl; no cafeteria in which to enjoy lunch; no water fountains when the days began to get warm, and no rest rooms when there was an urge to 'go'!

Close your eyes for a moment, think of the Hollywood School back THEN and see what kind of picture appears on the screen of your imagination. Is it possible it would be something like this - - -

It was a spring afternoon, unusually warm and the accumulation of knowledge was the last thought to cross the minds of many of the students.

The teacher, in her neat, long, black skirt and white 'waist' with the lace trimmed tucks down the front was almost (but not quite, thank goodness!) losing control of her classroom. She heaved a sigh and thought, "Just one more hour and the children will be free for today, and I'll be free, too!" With this thought to spur her on she made one final effort to gain the attention of the group of fifth graders and hear their 'times tables'.

No sooner than one of the students had gotten out of his seat and was ready to 'recite' the tables and the teacher noticed more than the usual amount of unrest at one end of the room.

Two of the older boys had returned from a trip to the nearby spring with a bucket of fresh water. As they put the wooden bucket on the shelf in the corner, she noticed they seemed to be trying to supress a giggle.

A young lady of about ten years of age raised her hand for permission to get a drink of water; permission was granted and the teacher went back to her work.

Suddenly a shrill scream filled the classroom; the teacher looked around. Standing in front of the shelf containing the water bucket, the gourd dipper in her shaking hand, the girl was pointing with her other hand to the bucket.

The teacher, wondering what could be going on, went over to take a look. Inside the wooden bucket, completely oblivious to the commotion in the classroom, a little frog was swimming happily around and around the bucket!

Frogs in the water bucket, a little girl's hair braids getting dipped in the ink wells (accidently, of course!) and so many other mischievous pranks were as much a part of 'schooling' back THEN as those fundamentals set forth as necessary by the school board.

Mrs. Mary Covington Bagby, a well-known and well-loved member of the Hollywood Community and the Hollywood Baptist Church was most helpful in supplying me with facts in order that this article could be written; I deeply appreciate it!

When asked to sum up her feeling about the Hollywood Community and church, Mrs. Bagby said, "From a one-room church in 1878 with oil lamps, and muddy roads until NOW 1978 with electricity, air conditioning, a beautiful sanctuary, seven Sunday school rooms, vestibule, bathrooms, basement, a hard-surfaced highway, Hollywood Church and the community have so much for which to be thankful and proud. We are thankful to God for his many blessings in inspiring those 13 members to build a church in this community."

The late Mrs. Isabella Day Beasley (Mrs. Ben Beasley), who for thirty years served as Postmaster of the Hollywood Community Post Office, is shown with four of her grandchildren. From left to right, Joseph DeWitt Beasley and William Robert Beasley, sons of DeWitt Beasley; Dorothy Beasley Hamlet of Hurt, Va., and Grover P. Beasley, Jr., of Appomattox, daughter and son of the late Grover P. Beasley, Sr. and Mrs. Virgia I. Beasley of Appomattox.

Mr. and Mrs. Beasley were the parents of four sons, two of whom lost their lives in the service of their country in World War I.

## DAR Chapter Tours Appomattox Park

**Meeting Held at "Charmos"**

Members of the Red Hill Chapter Daughter of the American Revolution enjoyed a memorable program and tour of the Appomattox Historical Park when they met recently at "Charmos", the home of Mrs. Webster Babcock in Appomattox. The program included a film on the surrender at Appomattox which was shown to the public for the first time about a month ago.

Following the program, the group returned to the home of Mrs. Babock for the business meeting. Mrs. Vincent Lusardi, regent, presided and announced that the Red Hill Chapter had received an honor roll award for the year. The chapter year book was awarded a red ribbon at the State Conference in Roanoke. Mrs. J. J. Riegel, chaplain, conducted the devotional, pledge of allegiance to the U.S. flag and the American's Creed.

Mrs. W. R. Herndon reported on the Memorial Service held at the State Conference in March. Two deceased members of the Red Hill Chapter were honored at this service, Mrs. Nettie Moses Dresser Martin of Appomattox and Mrs. Mary Stokes of Brookneal.

Assisting Mrs. Babcock as hostess was her neice, Miss Jean Lusardi, of Woodbridge.


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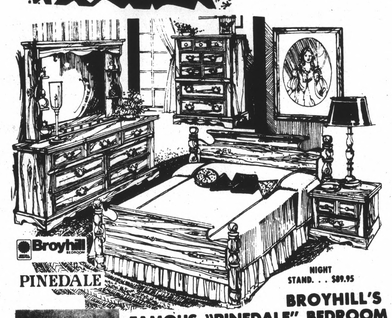


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